

P.I.C. Minutes-Region 1

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I. Welcome

Michelle Tarbuton, Parent Engagement Program Manager, opened the meeting by welcoming all in attendance, introducing the Georgia Department of Education staff in attendance and thanking Griffin RESA for hosting the meeting. She also explained that today's agenda was structured based on the comments and recommendations that were made at the last meeting. A general overview of the meeting was given as far as what to expect, which included voting on the parent engagement definition, completion of evaluations and distribution of certificates at the end of the meeting.

II. Introduction Activity

Lakeita Servance, Parent Engagement Specialist, introduced the opening activity entitled "What Is". This activity centered on defining "What Is a Good Parent, Advocate, Teacher, School and Community?" All participants were asked to collaborate with their neighbor and take two minutes to define each of these entities. This lead into a discussion based on factual perceptions and reasonable expectations. Participants volunteered to share their vision and definitions with the group. The key point made is that all of these entities are working together to help students achieve and no one can do it alone. It was also stated that today's objective is to learn what some counties are doing to make sure everyone is a part of the puzzle. We want everyone to take back concrete tools and use them to make that "What Is" vision a reality.

III. Learning From Each Other: Clarke County P.I.C. Presentation

Superintendent was the opening speaker and he stressed the importance of creating an environment where you are not telling parents and children what to do. Instead ask them what they would like to do and conform. He mentioned that the goal should be to bring children to a place they want to be at. We should definitely set high expectations for parents and encourage them to advocate for their child's success.

Greg Davis introduced the "Family Engagement" workshop and acknowledged Dr. Lynn Johns for providing refreshments for the morning segment. He gave a brief overview of the material enclosed in the Clarke County folders and stated that the information being presented is research driven and will be centered around seven policies. The administrative regulations included in the folder supports these policies.

Mary Kelly began the presentation of Component 1: Student/Family Learning - education is student and parent centered and inclusive of the voices and experiences of our students and families. She also stated that it is a true challenge to engage all parents in their children's learning and getting them to understand Georgia learning requirements. She mentioned some methods they have used to do this such as parent breakfast for K-5 and a mid-year parent

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breakfast for grades 1-5. They inform parents via invitations in English and Spanish and they make the even extra special by using glassware and linen table cloths.

Mimi Elliot-Gower stated that her school was re-zoned and they gained a high number of students in poverty. They were able to supply 300 low-income families with laptop computers for a nominal fee and provide some software training. This gave parents a boost in spite of the many stressors they endure daily.

Iulia Barton began the presentation of Component2: Communication –communication between home and school is open, frequent, meaningful, and conducted in multiple ways. She stated that parents need to know what’s going on and stay informed. One way you can do this is by community meetings held in housing neighborhoods, community centers, and other centralized locations. It’s important to host workshops not just about education, but about every aspect of their lives. An annual community fair is held and community partners participate in making this a successful effort. Free medical screenings, clothes, food and summer camp registration are among some of the offers presented at this event. This event is held to show families they are valued.

Sandra Blande stated that annual Title I meetings are held to inform parents of students’ academic performance, curriculum, and expectations for the year. Four questions that can be addressed at these meetings are:

- 1.) How can the school help your child be successful?
- 2.) How can your family help the school do a better job?
- 3.) What do you do as a parent to help your child learn?
- 4.) What can we do together to help all children succeed?

Communication through weekly folders is common. The most important information is normally sent home on Fridays. There is also a parent-teacher suggestion box and a parent board that features pertinent information. Several other communication avenues were suggested from teachers and administrators.

Maria Worsley introduced Component 3: Parenting-parenting skills are prompted and supported. Parent brochures and other resourcefull information are readily available for parents to obtain. She mentioned that she started making home visits to reach her parents because the middle and high school brochures sent home would end up on the ground. She also hand delivered invitations to parents for the parent night, which turned out to be a huge success.

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Clara Londono introduced Component 4: Positive & Equitable School Culture- school cultures are open, helpful and inviting. She mentioned that her school is 70% Latino and they created a classroom atmosphere that's reflects respect for all students and families. There is an open door policy for parents to come in this room expect during testing. Bi-lingual school personnel are present and all forms of communication are bi-lingual. The school is 98% free-reduced lunch and opportunities are created for parents to be involved by providing childcare, transportation, and translation services. Events are also held at various times during the day.

Michelle Pisarik began the presentation for Component 5: Parent Decision Making/Advocacy- parents are encouraged to provide advice, make recommendations and provide assistance in school decisions and advocacy that effect children and families. Two models were mentioned, the Family Engagement Action Team and the Family Engagement Specialist as a member of PTA and school council. These teams consist of parents, teachers, counselors and administrators. They are held every two months and all parents cannot attend but are encouraged to try. She talked about the success of implementing school uniforms because everyone was on board instead of it being an administrative decision only.

Jacqueline Shirley expounded on Component 5 and asked everyone to think of a time they were on a team or committee. Why did you choose to be a part of that team? What made your group successful? Parents are invited to join the school council and PTO so they can provide input on how to make the school better and develop more community collaborations. Some successful efforts have been parent coffees, musicians playing during lunch and the school's science night. She provided an example of the flier they used for the science night event.

Deborah Browne introduced Component 6: Collaborating with the Community- the school addresses student, family and community needs through appropriate services and cross institutional partnerships. She talked about how she was able to collaborate with community members and help parents and families obtain services such as dental care, medical attention, and emotional therapy. She was also able to collect \$1500, enough to feed 300 families. Families were also able to obtain clothing, food through pantries, and affordable housing through local partners.

Erica Kittrell expounded on Component 6 by stating that you have to know what a family's needs are to appropriately address them. One of the most effective strategies of obtaining this information is through surveys. Based on the needs of parents in the area, they were able to hold a Community Block Party and many members of the community supported it and provided services to the families in attendance. Nine organizations from UGA helped with the Around the World Culture Night. Parents were able to obtain many resources such as free tutoring for two hours per week. The Math Festival Night was also a huge success and they receive monetary donations in addition to many other wonderful services that were made available to students and

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parents. An end of the year event was held to thank community members for all of the time and resources they donated. A framed picture was sent all community partners who participated.

Meredith Needle introduced Component 7: Equity in Human Resources-our schools value the diversity of our families by utilizing the life experiences and community memberships of children, family and staff to support, individual student growth and overall school goals. She talked about the translation services that are provided and how all of the written documentation is translated in to Spanish.

Vicky Ricome gave us a demonstration of how the information is translated and these translation services are not limited to Spanish only. A special head-set is used for translation services.

Greg Davis closed the meeting by recognizing the Pre-K Family Engagement Specialists and reviewing the district policies that were presented. He also mentioned staff developments that are available for Family Engagement Specialist.

IV. Networking Conversation Activity

Michelle Tarbuton explained that she wanted participants to provide a written response to at least two of the following four questions:

- How do you engage parents at the middle and high school levels?
 - Student-led Conferences
 - Title I student awards
 - Open House
 - Spring Fling-Resource Night with childcare
 - Project Nights
 - Don't depend of students to deliver messages
 - College Entrance Requirements
 - Science Night
 - Hispanic Parent Committee
- What are some communication strategies you use in your school/district to keep parents informed?
 - Brochures
 - Flyers
 - Connect Ed
 - Agendas

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- Newsletters
 - School morning news
 - Local news channel
 - Backpack Express
 - Church
 - Parent Portal
 - E-mail
 - PTO meetings
 - Coffee with Principals
- What types of workshops do you find parents in your school/district are interested in?
- Computer Workshops
 - Understanding Test Scores
 - Budgeting/Finance
 - Parenting 101
 - Stress Relief
 - Bullying
 - Post secondary Options
 - Legal Issues
 - CRCT
 - Helping your child with reading/math
 - ELL classes
 - Students with Disabilities
 - Transition to Work
 - Cyber bullying
 - CAFÉ workshops
 - Discipline
- What type of professional development does your school/district offer to school staff, teachers, and administrators on parent engagement?
- Creating a Welcoming School
 - Culturally Relevant Literature
 - 3-Way Conferences
 - Health and Community Fair
 - How to Establish Early Contact with Parents

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- Kaiser Permanente Teacher Training

V. Parent Workshop- Learning Your Child's School System: The Key to Success

Michelle Tarbuton featured a workshop that will educate parents about the governance of schools. This workshop was designed for Parent Involvement Coordinators to take back and format to fit their school and district structure so they can inform parents about the school personnel that are key to helping them and their child succeed. Knowledge is power and that point was stressed throughout the presentation. Many times parents are at a lost and do not know who to turn to for certain educational issues they need addressed. Knowing who your Local Board of Education members are, how funds are dispersed, and how employment of certain school personnel is determined were also among some of the topics discussed. The use of acronyms has been a barrier to parents, so an acronym sheet and game were provided for Parent Involvement Coordinators to use in assisting parents with breaking down this barrier. A navigation tool was also provided as a quick reference guide for parents. The chain of assistance normally starts with the teacher as indicated on the handout. A contact form was also distributed for parents to write in the contact information of school personnel they need for specific issues. This form should be tailored to reflect your school structure. Some commonly used terms were also mentioned and at the end, a game was played by all to test their knowledge based on the workshop. This game is also available for parents to play after the workshop to make sure they grasped the main points. Parent will definitely feel empowered once they are familiar with their child's school and structure.

VI. Working Lunch: State Family Engagement Policy

Michelle Tarbuton explained that the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council is currently working on developing a State Family Engagement Policy, as the Georgia Department of Education recognizes that parental involvement is the key to academic achievement. The policy will provide a clear explanation of the state's vision for family engagement, which in hopefully will highlight the importance and support the implementation of family engagement in our local school districts and schools. In addition the policy will also provide parents with an understanding of not only what they should expect from their schools, but what they should expect to contribute as active partners in their child's learning. As Parent Engagement professionals, participants were asked to talk in groups and provide feedback on the following question to help guide the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council in their work:

What is important for you to see in Georgia's State Parent Engagement Policy?

The answers were as follow:

- Communication is a two way street; parents should play an integral part

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- Reconstruction of old computers to give to families who don't have one
- Parent-friendly policy suitable for all economic, racial, cultural and educational background
- Promote partnerships
- Make parent involvement a community wide effort, rather than just a school effort
- Educate parents in all aspects of the curriculum
- Recognize that parental involvement is the key to academic achievement
- Open-door policy for parents
- Promote an atmosphere where the families of children with special needs feel fully included in the school and community
- Good school climate
- Multiple methods of communication
- Promote and support responsible parenting
- Simplicity
- Administrative leaders must recognize and encourage a climate conducive to parent/family participation
- Personal Home Visits
- Mandated professional development to enhance understanding and effective parent involvement strategies
- Identify parent volunteer opportunities in and out of school
- Shared responsibility for continuous learning across student life (birth to adulthood)

VII. Networking Conversation Activity

National PTA Standards Defined

Standard I- Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Standard II- Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Participants were asked to split into groups according to the numbers on their badge. These groups consisted of Elementary, Middle, High, and District level personnel. Based on the National PTA Standards I and II, participants were asked to list their best practices for implementing these in their schools and/or districts.

The responses were as follow:

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Elementary Standard I-

➤ Welcome

- Friendly receptionist
- Posters
- Greeters at front door
- Welcoming Family Room
- Bi-lingual staff
- Customer service training
- Parent breakfast
- Principal coffees
- Artwork display
- Accommodate grandparents, special education and different cultures
- Open door policy
- ESOL Nights
- Title I Meeting
- Curriculum Night
- Make school events more engaging

Elementary Standard II-

➤ Communication

- Cultural events
- Flyers
- Backpack Express
- Classroom events
- Bulletin Board
- Calendar
- E-mails
- Parent Portal
- Phone calls
- Administrative staff visible
- Campus Messenger
- Notes in agenda books
- Newsletters
- Labels on kids
- Translator
- Meetings in community



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Middle Standard I-

- Welcome
 - Welcome staff
 - Provide good customer service
 - Use Multi-lingual visuals
 - Inclusion
 - Parent Service Representative
 - Family Night
 - Open House
 - Inviting décor

Middle Standard II-

- Communication
 - Multi-lingual publications
 - Translator
 - Newsletter
 - Parent Link
 - PTO/PTA
 - Media
 - Parent Portal
 - Connect Ed

High Standard I-

- Welcome
 - Signs in different languages
 - Friendly receptionist
 - Bi-lingual Intern
 - Open House
 - Mandatory home visits

High Standard II-

- Communication
 - Parent Portal
 - Connect Ed
 - E-mail
 - Website-School based
 - Home visits

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District Standard I-

- Welcome
 - Open House
 - Title I Annual Meeting
 - Curriculum Night
 - Welcome Back notices/Bi-lingual
 - Good first impression
 - Diversity Celebration
 - Diversity sensitivity
 - Accessibility
 - Community Outreach
 - Parent Engagement Specialist in each school
 - Phone contact
 - Parent Portal
 - Identify parent interests and capitalize on them
 - Build relationships
 - Parent Resource Center
 - Provide transportation, childcare, and translators
 - Transition events-new to school ice breakers
 - Cross Cultural Education for School Staff

District Standard II-

- Communication
 - Orientation
 - Information in multiple languages
 - E-mail
 - Home visits
 - Phone Calls
 - Parent conferences
 - Newspaper
 - School website
 - Media
 - Marquees
 - Simple communication
 - 2-way communication

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VIII. Designing Your Family Resource Center

Lakeita Servance featured a workshop entitled “Establishing Title I Parent Resource Centers.” Most in attendance already had parent resource centers either in their school or district. The workshop was designed to help them improve their centers or determine if they need a center for their school or district. It was mentioned that these centers are not mandatory, but the need for one is determined by the Title I parent surveys that are distributed annually. She mentioned the initial set-up essentials if it is decided that a resource center is needed. Hours of operation, staff and location were some key factors to be considered. These centers should cater to the needs of your Title I families and be in a centralized location. School centers should be located near the entrance of the school so it is easily accessible for parents. Visual samples of a parent resource center in Batesville, Mississippi were featured as an example of what could be included in a center. Academic and leisure books and games were featured. A visual sample of the amenities that could be in a parent center was also provided. Among these were couches, coffee, pastries, and a general meeting area for parents to collaborate on their own. Space could be an issue for some, so P.I.C.’s were told to advocate for themselves and show evidence that the parent center is important by the results of their parent surveys. In addition, it was emphasized that providing resource in multiple languages is essential. Community members and school staff can periodically utilize the center by hosting parent workshops. Sample workshop ideas were provided for the group to use as they see fit. P.I.C.’s were also encouraged to train parent leaders in their school so they can assist with hosting workshops and getting other parents actively involved. It was stressed that your parent center must be a place where parents feel welcome.

Michelle Tarbutton featured an activity that allowed all in attendance to create their own Parent Resource Center based on scenarios that were distributed. Participants utilized scissors, markers, yarn, construction paper, and glue in creating these centers. The scenarios focused on rural, suburban and urban common family needs. The items that would be included in these parent centers based on familial need were:

Rural- computer center, kitchenette, daycare, DVD’s, Leap pads, food pantry, kidz corner, lending library, meeting area, provide transportation, legal services, social and emotional assistance, referrals, food pantry, mobile family resource center for those who lack transportation, everything should be bi-lingual.

Suburban- circle time, work table, active board, TV, computer lab, kitchenette, refreshments, computer access, ESL classes, Migrant program, sports oriented, brochures, bulletin board, activity bags, games, lending library, everything should be bi-lingual ,mobile parent center called “Family Fun on the Move” to reach parents at sporting events.



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Urban-games, computer station, meeting area with sofa, reading center, DVD player, conference area, clothing closet, childcare, entertainment station, community resources, family planning information, area for nursing mothers, refreshments, career center, after school programs, adult computer classes, library card registration assistance, GED classes, everything should be bi-lingual.

Each team presented their scenario and Parent Resource Center before the entire group.

IX. Closing

Participants were asked to complete their evaluations and voting ballots, and submit them in the appropriate boxes. Participants were informed that the minutes and material presented would be available by April 22, 2010. The dates for the State Title I Conference were announced, which are June 14-17, 2010 in Atlanta, GA. Participants were encouraged to consult with their schools and districts as to whether they'll be able to attend. Michelle Tarbutton thanked everyone for attending and certificates were distributed to all in attendance.